

Getting the signal

■ Firm brings wireless cable TV to rural Brown Co.

By Warren Gerds

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Another TV technology — wireless cable — has arrived in Northeastern Wisconsin.

It's for rural folks.

Green Bay Entertainment Network is beaming up to eight channels of programming to subscribers.

Six are basic channels — CNN, The Discovery Channel, ESPN, The Nashville Network, USA and WGN.

Two are pay — HBO and Showtime.

Wireless cable signals are transmitted through the air by microwave instead of using a network of wires.

The new company transmits from the tower of the former WXYZ-TV, Channel 32, on Scray's Hill southeast of De Pere. Offices are located at 1861 Enterprise Drive, De Pere.

Chris Hilliard, president, figures there are 24,000 uncabled homes within a 35-mile radius of the tower. He points

out the company is not competing with cable systems.

"We have enough fish to fry with all the rural people who want it (wireless cable)," Hilliard said.

Word of mouth brought more than 500 inquiries about signing up, he said.

To avoid long delays in installation, Hilliard said the firm is accepting orders only among Brown County residents at this time. Orders from other areas will be added at later dates, he said.

Hilliard

and partners have been installing similar systems in Minnesota, Nebraska and North and South Dakota. Two other systems are planned for future development in Wisconsin.

Wireless cable home antennas vary in size depending on the distance from the tower. The greater the distance, the bigger the antenna. Some are smaller than a foot square.

The costs (plus tax): \$25 installation and first month of service, \$22 a month for basic service, \$11 for HBO, and \$6 for Showtime.

Other channels may be added, but the Federal Communications Commission is in the midst weighing assorted issues at the

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Press-Gazette photo by Joan Gutheridge

New technology: Chris Hilliard, president of Green Bay Entertainment Network in De Pere, shows some examples of antennae used in wireless cable TV operations.

moment, Hilliard said.

The local system operates with 50 watts of power.

The signal is sent line of sight. That means buildings, hills or valleys may stand in the way of

reception. A ridge to the south of the tower is blocking out some potential homes, but otherwise there are no major problems, Hilliard said.